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## 3 THE NATIONAL FORESTS:

Primary purposes of the National Forests, as stated by Congress, are:

- A. To furnish a "continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States."
- B. To secure "favorable conditions of water flows."

Those continue to be far-seeing and wise purposes served by these wildland properties.

### Background

In 1891 Congress provided for establishment of forest reserves (now known as National Forests) to save what was left of the public-domain forest resources from destructive exploitation and rapid dissipation. Large areas of publicly owned timber were being taken by speculators through loose handling of the public land laws or through outright fraud. The headwaters of many streams subject to serious floods were being seriously damaged by destructive logging and fires, and by unrestricted grazing. For similar reasons, Congress later enacted the Weeks Law and other laws authorizing the creation of additional National Forests.

### The National Forests Today

There are now 151 National Forests, administered by the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. They comprise some 181 million acres of land in 39 States, Alaska and Puerto Rico. As never-ending sources of water, timber, forage, wildlife, and recreation, they serve nationwide needs and help to stabilize local communities dependent on these resources. The conservation--through wise use--of all these resources and services, on a coordinated basis, is a controlling aim in the management of these public properties.

"All land is to be devoted to its most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies... where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run." This policy was announced in 1905 by Secretary of Agriculture "Tama Jim" Wilson when the Forest Service was established and charged with the management of the National Forests. It has been the guiding principle of national-forest administration ever since.

### A Federal Responsibility

Protection, development, and management of the National Forests is primarily a Federal responsibility because:

1. They provide in addition to a timber supply for current needs, an assured reserve of forest resources for national emergencies, for national defense and security.

2. Flood prevention and other beneficial regulation of waterflows through watershed protection, are largely interstate problems. The Small Watershed Act of the 83rd Congress recognizes anew the high priority of upstream flood prevention and watershed management. It authorizes the Department to cooperate with local governments and citizens in this work and to install flood prevention measures directly on Federal lands.

Many streams which are the actual or potential source both (a) of floods and (b) of useful water for industrial, agricultural, or domestic purposes, cross State boundaries. The streamflow may cause damage or be used 500 or 1,000 miles from where it falls as rain or snow. States or individuals are not likely to undertake the job of watershed protection for the benefit of downstream communities and users in other States.

3. The National Forests serve as great demonstration areas of the type of good forest and related wildland management needed in the interest of national welfare. They provide yardsticks for desirable conservation practices. Many National Forest areas are in use as Wilderness Areas; others are used for research, along with their other uses. (Stable ownership is essential for long-term demonstrations, continuous wilderness conditions, and experimentation.)
4. The National Forests are managed for a continuous yield of all their resources for the benefit of their owners--the people of all the United States. This "multiple-use" Management aims to bring about the development and wise use of all their resources (water, timber, forage, minerals, wildlife, recreation, and other), not just of one or two of them. It brings the largest total of returns and benefits to the largest number of people.
5. Historically, other countries have been gravely weakened--some, such as those in the near and middle East, to a desperately low economic level--because of their failure to provide for conserving basic soil, water, and forest resources.
6. Tax money from all parts of the country (not just the local people) has gone into their development. They represent an investment over a long period of years on behalf of all the people.
7. Few States or individuals could, or should be expected to meet the heavy costs of protecting adequately those great (solid and intermingled) areas within the National Forests--the noncommercial lands--which produce no money return, but nevertheless have highly important watershed and other interstate public values.

#### The National Forests Help To Maintain The Strength of our Nation

The well-being and future security of every citizen depend in part on both the protective and the productive functions of forests. The National Forests exercise vital functions of that type in regard to water and soil. As a result, they protect the downstream communities and concurrently benefit the agricultural economy, the development of hydroelectric industries, and the general welfare of rural and urban peoples. Also, because National Forests provide a sustained-yield source of raw materials for a wide variety of industries and a favorable environment for wildlife and recreation, they constitute an important element in the economic stability, progress, and welfare of the Nation. Faced as we are with continuing world emergencies, and with an increasing population, it is obvious that we must make wise use of all our natural resources, because they are indispensable for our defense and our standard of living.



Pay Their Own Way - While Yielding Widespread Benefits

The value of many beneficial returns from the National Forests cannot be expressed in terms of cash receipts to the U. S. Treasury. Unquestionably, however, the overall value of such benefits as reduction of floods, assurance of dependable water supplies, contributions to community stability, and outdoor recreation for millions of people, is great beyond calculation.

Yet all these benefits are being obtained essentially without cost to the taxpayers.

In fiscal year 1952, and again in fiscal year 1953, cash receipts of more than \$70,000,000 from timber sales, grazing fees, and other uses exceeded all National Forest expenditures for protection, management, and development by more than \$10,000,000. This comparison takes no account of the payment of 25% of gross receipts to the States for reasons discussed below.

In addition to those cash receipts, the capital value of National Forest timber assets increased by more than \$70,000,000 a year--mainly because of increases in the volume of annual timber growth and in other values.

Other public values (receipts) not included above are estimated to exceed \$250,000,000 annually. In this figure dollar values are attributed to water, recreation, and wildlife resources based upon such partial criteria as are available. For example, water values, which account for the bulk of this amount, are based on a conservative value per acre-foot for the water from the National Forests that is used for irrigation, power, municipal water supplies, and industrial use.

More than 90% of the cash receipts from the National Forests come from less than half of their area. That means that for the country as a whole, all National-Forest lands, including the non-cash-producing watershed areas, are now being protected, managed and developed at no cost to the Federal Government because of the cash returns from that half of the National Forests which are commercial forests. Consequently, to eliminate these commercial lands from the National Forest, as some have proposed, would place an added heavy burden on the Federal budget--that of providing needed and indispensable protection and management for great areas of watershed and other public use lands that do not produce cash revenue. Or if, as also has been proposed at times, both the commercial and non-commercial acreage were eliminated from the National Forests, great areas of non-income-producing watersheds would be endangered by serious forest fires and other damaging effects, because the new landlords could not (or would not) afford to provide them with the costly protection needed in the public interest.

Financial Returns to the States

Each year an amount equal to 25 percent of the gross receipts is paid by the Federal Government to the States for distribution to counties containing National Forest lands. These payments are for county road and school funds.

An additional 10 percent of National Forest receipts in each State is spent directly by the Forest Service for road construction and maintenance of benefit to local communities.

It is sometimes said that the States lose much revenue because the National Forests have been "taken off" the State tax rolls. Ninety-five percent of the National Forest lands in the West never were on State tax rolls. In the Eastern States, much of the land purchased for National Forest purposes was tax-delinquent at the time of purchase. Large areas of

National Forest land are alpine, semiarid, or brush-covered land that never in any circumstances could pay much in taxes, although these lands are important for furnishing water supplies and providing protection from flood and silt damage. Nevertheless, as previously noted, 25 percent of gross receipts from the National Forests are paid each year to the States for distribution to local governments.

In addition, as previously noted, there are contributions-in-kind to the States which alone probably exceed, on a nationwide average basis, the taxes that might be derived from the National Forests. Such contributions-in-kind are varied in character. The Federal Government spends millions of dollars each year for road building and maintenance and for fire protection, the costs of which otherwise would have to be borne by the States and local governments; and also for forest restoration, recreational, and other development work that greatly benefits the States.

### National Forest Resources

#### Water

National Forests protect the headwaters of many of our major streams. They are managed to reduce floods and erosion, and to obtain dependable yields of water for industry, irrigation, agriculture, hydroelectric power, and for town and city water supplies. Watershed protection gets first consideration in all plans for National Forest management.

#### National Forests are a major source of water for:

Approximately 1,800 towns and cities. Hundreds of other communities and thousands of residents of rural areas also receive all or part of their water supply from the National Forests.

More than 13 million of the 21 million acres of irrigation areas.

More than 600 power developments.

Thousands of industrial plants.

Water from the National Forests is priceless.

National Forest watershed land includes commercial types of timber and range, intermingled with alpine timber types or brushland of little or no commercial value. A private owner would have little or no financial incentive to incur the cost of watershed protection which does not, of itself, yield him any return. Yet in the public interest it is often more important to protect the noncommercial timber and brush on an area of high watershed value than a stand of choice timber on an area of lower watershed influence.

National Forest management of these watersheds therefore means that water users are not dependent upon present or future individual owners of far-distant areas for protection of their water supply.

National Forest watersheds are managed to reduce flood runoff and erosion, with consequent downstream protection against sediment-filled reservoirs (many built at public expense), choked stream channels--frequent floods, mud-clogged irrigation canals and ditches, silt-polluted water supplies, and sediment damage to fish resources.



## Timber

Great areas of National Forest land are too poor to be attractive to private forest ownership. Many of the more productive forest areas are so intermingled with less productive land, and with areas of important watershed or recreational values, as to make segregation undesirable, if not uneconomic. Practically all of the lands classed as suitable for agriculture were eliminated from the National Forests long ago. Furthermore, only about 76 million acres of National Forest land in the 48 States is classed as commercial forest land. This is only one-sixth of all the land capable of and available for producing timber of commercial quantity and quality. In general, the National Forests contain the least accessible and least desirable portion of the country's commercial forest land. Included are many areas acquired after they had been so badly depleted that previous owners felt they could not afford to provide them with needed protection, rehabilitation, and management.

Nevertheless, the National Forests support more than 522 billion board-feet of sawtimber--almost one-third of the nation's present sawtimber stand. This is chiefly because the more inaccessible and high country of the West--which went into the National Forests--has been the last to be reached in the process of utilizing the nation's virgin timber resources. But it is also due in part, particularly in the East, to the years of protection and management which have restored the productivity of run-down forests on acquired lands and safeguarded growing stock needed for sustained yield.

National Forest timber now plays an important part in the nation's timber supply. During fiscal year 1953 the cut of National Forest timber reached 5.16 billion board feet, or about 10 percent of the country's total timber cut. Within the sustained-yield capacity of each natural management unit, National Forest timber normally is sold for private operation under competitive bid at not less than its appraised value. Timber is marked or designated for cutting under recognized forest practices to encourage reproduction, maintain and improve the growing stock, and safeguard watershed and recreational values. Policy in the sale of National Forest timber is to help meet the present and future national need for forest products, sustain dependent communities, and encourage independent local operators.

Cash receipts to the U. S. Treasury in fiscal year 1953 from sales of National Forest stumpage exceeded \$70,000,000.

Gains in capital values of the National Forest timber resource because of increased growth and higher prices have, as of 1953, averaged approximately \$70,000,000 a year. This is indicative of the very great value of this resource to all the people.

With National Forest timber management, communities and the nation are assured that the lands will be managed to produce a permanent supply of raw material.

With due consideration for needs of local people and industries, timber is made available for sale on equal terms to all.

Low cash-income producing areas, which nevertheless are of definite inter-state value, are provided the needed protection and management which local agencies cannot, reasonably, be expected to provide. Badly depleted areas are restored to productivity.

Timber reaches the channels of trade without undue detriment to watershed, recreation, range, wildlife, and other public values,

The National Forests can do a special service in assuming a substantial part of the country's future production of big timber and high-quality material. Most private second-growth forests are now being utilized while the timber is still relatively small. High-quality timber needed for many special products is becoming scarcer.

### Forage

Large areas of National Forest land are suitable for seasonal livestock grazing. Most of these grazing lands are in the West. Much of the National Forest range is also valuable for watershed. Most of it also produces timber or is so intermingled with timberland that it is impractical to segregate from timberland. Under the multiple-use policy it is managed to produce forage as well as timber and other wildland products.

Before the National Forests were established, grazing was unrestricted. There were frequent wars between cattlemen and sheepmen. Far too many animals ran in the forests, and many ranges already were badly deteriorated. The Forest Service undertook to bring order out of this serious situation, to set up an equitable system of allotment of grazing privileges, and over the years, to bring grazing use into balance with sustained forage growth.

Under permits issued by the Forest Service, some 8 million cattle and sheep now graze each year on National Forest ranges. Use of the forage is shared by about 20,000 permittees. Demand for grazing privileges is far in excess of the carrying capacity of the range.

Grazing management on the National Forests takes into account the watershed and other important values and uses of both local and wider importance. Subject to consideration of these values, National Forest policy aims at making it possible to produce the greatest practicable yield of livestock on a sustained-yield basis and at the same time to maintain the forage resource and improve it as may be needed. This contributes toward a permanent, stable livestock industry. It avoids excessive grazing for quick short-term profits which causes damage to forage stands. The grazing preferences of the many small permittees are protected from absorptions and monopoly by large, nonresident livestock interests.

### Recreation

All National Forest lands are open to the public for recreational use, except where fire or avalanche hazards are extreme. More than 33 million visits to National Forests are made yearly by recreationists from all States of the Union for camping, picnicking, fishing, hunting, swimming, skiing, hiking, riding, and numerous other activities. Additional millions motor through the National Forests each year primarily to enjoy the scenery and outdoor environment.

The Forest Service has developed some 4,700 improved areas for camping, picnicking, and winter sports, and other facilities for public use.

Within the National Forests, 78 Wilderness Areas, Wild Areas, and Roadless Areas, totaling 14 million acres, have been set aside to preserve wilderness conditions. These areas are available for scientific studies and for those who like "nature unchanged." If these areas were not maintained in public forests, they would be subject to road construction and commercial uses which would destroy their wilderness values. None of these areas could be maintained in permanent wilderness condition under private ownership.

To a large extent, the National Forest type of outdoor recreation can be provided only by public forests. Such recreational uses could seldom be made profitable for an individual landowner without charging fees beyond the reach of most citizens. (Private ownership would tend toward a single-use management of the land. Except on a few of the choicest spots, recreation facilities would probably not be developed.)

Outdoor recreation opportunities on every National Forest are therefore available to all citizens of every State, including those with slim purses who could not pay high commercial rates.

Certain areas are withdrawn from other use for recreational purposes. Nevertheless, they still serve important watershed purposes, and the watershed values are taken into consideration in their management. Elsewhere, through multiple-use management, recreational use is provided with minimum interference with other productive forest uses.

The spending done by millions of recreational users from all parts of the country is an important source of income to local business in many communities.

### Wildlife

National Forests are the home of one-third of America's big-game animals. They contain 81,000 miles of fishing streams, 1,500,000 acres of natural lakes, and 635,000 acres of impounded waters.

Under State regulations, hunting and fishing are allowed on National Forests. Over 6 million fishermen and hunters from all states in the Union enjoy use of these forests each year.

Multiple-use management of the National Forests aims to develop and maintain habitat conditions that favor desirable numbers of fish, game, and nongame animals. As public lands, the National Forests provide hunting and fishing opportunities to the citizens of all the States. The wildlife resources are accessible also to photographers, naturalists, scientists, campers, and others.

With increased posting of private lands, more people are using the 180 million acres of unposted and largely unfenced National Forests. These areas will not be closed to public use (except under emergency conditions).

Expenditures by hunters and fishermen make a big contribution to local sporting goods stores, service stations, and other business. The hunters and fishermen support the State fish and game programs through purchase of hunting and fishing licenses.

### Minerals

The National Forests created from the public domain are open to prospecting, and mineral resources may be developed and utilized, under a leasing system or through patenting of claims under provisions of the United States Mining laws. On other National Forests minerals are disposable by lease or permit.

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